the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. As per the Act, Vigilance Committees have been constituted both at district and sub-divisional levels by the States/Union Territories for identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers. The District and Sub-Divisional Magistrates have been entrusted with certain duties and responsibilities under the Act with a view to take punitive action against the offenders for violation of the provisions of the Act. Incidence of Bonded Labour System have been reported from time to time, from 17 States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

(c) and (d) The National Human Rights Commission in their report dated 27th March, 2003 submitted to the Hon'ble Supreme Court informed that the response received from some States in relation to furnishing of information for monitoring of identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers was unsatisfactory, and requested that specific directions be issued by the Apex Court to these States. The Supreme Court in its order dated 15-7-2003 in Writ Petition No. 3922/85 have directed 11 State Governments to furnish required status reports as requested by the NHRC with effect from 1st January, 2002. The Ministry of Labour has also requested these State Governments for compliance of the above directions.

Amendment in child labour laws

3102. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY;
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Human Rights Commission has impressed upon the Central Government to amend laws relating to child labour and set a time frame to achieve free and compulsory education for children in collaboration with the States; and

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations made by the Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Commission has urged the Government of India to act with speed and determination to re-write the laws regarding child labour and acting with the State Governments, set a time frame to achieve free and compulsory education for the children of the country.

Employment exchanges

†3103. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are some districts in the country where the employment exchanges are not functioning;

(b) if so, the name of such districts, State-wise;

(c) whether Government have set a target to open employment exchanges in all district Headquarters and the cities having population over one lakh; and

(d) if so, by when, these employment exchanges would be opened?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (d) There are 943 Employment Exchanges in the country as on March, 2003. Employment Exchanges function under the financial and administrative control of the State/Union Territory Governments. The respective State/Union Territory Governments decide opening or closing of Employment Exchanges keeping in view the local need of various regions of the State.

Bonded girl labourers in A.P.

3104. MISS MABEL REBELLO:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether during a survey girls were found engaged as bonded labour in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether this illegal practice has been going on since long;

(c) whether around 4,50,000 children in the age group of 6—14 years are employed in cotton seed fields in the country of which Andhra Pradesh alone account for 2,47,800; and

(d) if so, the action taken by Government to free them from bonded labour and send them to schools under the new legislative provisions of free education?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.